

S [REDACTED] Impact

Your Honor,

S [REDACTED] was my older cousin, but as I am an only child, she was the closest I had to a sister. I always looked up to S [REDACTED]. As a child, we would go up the street visiting all the retirees. We would rake their leaves and talk for hours. There was an innocence about her that did not fear anyone, because she saw the good in everyone. Her heart was a special place.

I looked up to S [REDACTED] because she was hard-working. As much as I can remember, she had a job as soon as she could. She worked long hours while keeping up with school and dabbled in sports. She worked hard for her money, but was always generous to spend it. I looked up to S [REDACTED] because of her generosity. Everytime we went shopping, it seemed like she was buying a gift for someone. When I didn't have money for a starbucks, she would order a huge one to share. You never think it would be the little things about someone to make such an impact until they are gone.

I looked up to S [REDACTED] because even with her busy schedule, she always showed up when it mattered the most: family. She cheered me on in my concerts and plays. She rarely missed a family dinner, no matter how often we had them. She had a strong value when it came to family. She was excited to start her own little family. She was so close to that.

I looked up to S [REDACTED] because of her thoughtfulness. I have a text she sent me on my move-in day for college just a few months before her death. I think I've read this a thousand times when I need her words of encouragement. "Hey I know today was your move in day so enjoy your freedom and let loose! I hope you have a good year of college and an enjoyable dorm room life experience and you know if you ever need anything even a ride or to vent or get out and go somewhere just shoot me a text or call I love you and good luck on college girl!! <3<3 I know you will do great and try not to be too hard on yourself." She always knew I was overly-anxious and high-strung. She was always trying to get me to relax and enjoy my life. She managed to go through life while with a calm outlook. I looked up to her for that, too.

I try to carry those pieces of S [REDACTED] with me. Compared to her, I probably fail each day. I have been trying to live my life for S [REDACTED] and M [REDACTED] M [REDACTED], because their lives were stolen. There will never be a day that goes by where the load I carry is light. Every smile is met with grief because S [REDACTED] and M [REDACTED] are not here. I lost the person I looked up to my entire life.

On October 31st, 2017, I got picked up from college by my dad with no explanation. When we got to the car, I saw a sorrow on his face that I've never seen on anyone before. He was choking on the words "she's gone, she's gone". When he was finally able to mutter "S [REDACTED]", I heard a scream like a train crashing. I watched from above my father hold me like I was going to float away, and then I realized the scream was coming from myself. There is nothing that can prepare someone for news like this. She was barely an adult. 20 years old.

We gathered as a family. I watched the white of my mom's eye turn red as the vessels popped from her screaming and crying. I watched grief overcome my family, the ones that matter most, like a chilling, dark cloak. I saw helplessness. This helplessness and grief still hangs on my family's shoulders to this day. I have been stuck in the year 2017 for seven years. My grief has been unhealed, rotting, tunneling through me. I pay taxes to my grief with every ounce of joy I experience in life. I see my family do the same.

On the day S [REDACTED] and M [REDACTED] died, the world split in two: what is, and what should have been. S [REDACTED] should be 27 years old, dropping off M [REDACTED] at elementary school, meeting with her teachers, joining field trips. M [REDACTED] should be growing up and exploring the world with her little cousins. Instead, we have what is. S [REDACTED] is forever 20 years old, buried. M [REDACTED] grew cold inside her. Fear has invaded my heart.

The only reason I had the courage to put my heart on this page is because I recently had a dream re-living the last hug I ever gave S [REDACTED]. I remember thinking to myself that her belly had finally "popped". I felt the weight of M [REDACTED] against me as we hugged tightly. I like to think that S [REDACTED] is somewhere still cheering me on and sending me signs to keep going.

I hope and pray that no family ever has to feel pain like this ever again. Please consider the highest length sentence for Darius Carter, so that my family and I can feel safe and know that this pain will not happen to anyone else.

Thank you, Your Honor, for hearing my statement.